

Evaluator may have hourly or percentage fee

By Roger Boye

More questions on coins and currency are answered this week.

Q—My father left us a valuable collection of gold coins and silver dollars. We'd like to get them appraised, inasmuch as we know nothing about coins. How much would a professional charge to do the job?

Y.P., Lake Villa

A—Many coin dealers will evaluate small quantities of coins at no cost. For checking large accumulations, some dealers might bill you at an hourly rate [say \$40 or \$50 an hour] while others would charge a percentage of the total appraised value [perhaps 3 to 5 percent].

Also, dealers often will waive or rebate the fee if you later decide to sell the coins to the person who did the work.

Q—Recently we received a Statue of Liberty three-coin set from the United States Mint. The coins are beautiful except for a nick in the silver dollar. How should we complain about the problem?

T.S., Chicago

A—Send the set by registered mail to Deborah Johnson, Consumer Affairs Division, United States Mint, 10001 Aerospace Road, Lanham, Md. 20706. Enclose a letter requesting an exchange.

Another option—somewhat more time-consuming but cheaper—is to write to Johnson, explaining the problem. She'll probably send you at no cost a postage-paid label to use in returning your damaged set.

Q—In a recent column you mentioned that uncirculated \$500 bills might be worth as much as \$650 to a collector. Does the government still make large bills? Are they available at a bank? Also, whose portrait is [or was] on them?

E.R., Chicago

A—Uncle Sam last printed Federal Reserve notes valued at \$500 or more in 1946; a \$100 bill is tops today. Banks no longer issue large-denomination money, although a few coin dealers still sell the bills [at a premium over face value].

President William McKinley is depicted on the \$500 note of series 1928; President Grover Cleveland on the \$1,000; President James Madison on \$5,000; and Salmon P. Chase [Treasury secretary in Abraham Lincoln's administration] on the \$10,000.

Also, President Woodrow Wilson adorns a \$100,000 gold certificate, series 1934.